

CSAP WORKPLACE MANAGED CARE PROJECT

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA STUDY

RESULTS OF EMPLOYEE SURVEY

*Substance Abuse and Substance Abuse Prevention
in the Workplace*

Acknowledgments

This study is funded by Cooperative Agreement Number U1K SP 08143-01 with the Workplace Managed Care Program of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

ABSTRACT

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention is funding a multi-site study to ascertain primary prevention and early intervention programs that successfully decrease substance abuse in a workplace population. This paper presents results from a survey given to employees at one of nine sites. Survey topics include substance use behavior and use of workplace health services. A stratified random sample of employees was selected to receive this survey by mail. A total of 1,128 surveys was returned translating to an overall response rate of 57.2%. Almost 42% of respondents admitted to using illegal drugs during their lifetime, but of this group, only 9% have used illegal drugs in the past year and 5% within the past month. The proportion of females who on at least one day during the past month had four or more drinks at one sitting or within a couple of hours of each other was 16% with 5% doing so on three or more days.

The corresponding percentages for males were 17% and 6%, where five or more drinks replaced four or more drinks in the definition of binge drinking. Participation in existing workplace preventive health services varied widely: 53% for occupational health services, 36% for the health risk appraisal, 18% for health promotion classes, and 15% for employee assistance programs. At least

71% of users of any of these services were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the help received. Results from this survey indicate that a majority of employees were not taking advantage of several workplace health services, some of which can help with substance use problems. Promotional efforts for existing and new services are among the interventions to improve substance abuse prevention and early intervention at this worksite. A future survey will help to assess the effect of such efforts.

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention is interested in decreasing substance abuse in the workplace through:

- ➔ primary prevention programs and
- ➔ early intervention programs.

This study's workplace population consists of approximately 13,000 employees at a large U.S. public university. Jobs include:

- ➔ academic faculty,
- ➔ health care providers,
- ➔ administrative/technical support, and
- ➔ production/construction workers.

Most employees are members of the faculty or classified staff who can use workplace health services provided by Institute for Quality (IQ) Health Virginia, a non-profit extension of the university's health system.

IQ Health Virginia's services include:

- ➔ occupational health services,
- ➔ health risk appraisal,
- ➔ health promotion classes, and
- ➔ the faculty/employee assistance program.

METHODS

A survey was conducted to assess:

- ➔ prevalence of substance use and abuse,
- ➔ knowledge of the health services provided, and
- ➔ participation in and satisfaction with health services.

Who: Eligible employees at a large U.S. public university

The employee population can be categorized into three separate groups: faculty, classified staff, and wage. The faculty and classified staff are eligible to participate in all workplace health services. These two groups form the population of interest.

Random samples of faculty and classified staff from both Medical Center (MC) and non-Medical Center (non-MC) employees received the survey.

What: A stratified random sample survey

The 9-page questionnaire included information on:

- ➔ workplace satisfaction,
- ➔ knowledge, use, and satisfaction with workplace services,
- ➔ substance use behaviors,
- ➔ perceptions of risk associated with substance use,
- ➔ family history of substance use,
- ➔ general well-being,
- ➔ stress and satisfaction in different roles, and
- ➔ demographics and employment descriptors

When: August – September, 1998

To preserve confidentiality, an initial mailing of the survey was sent with a postcard, which respondents were encouraged to return independently of the survey. Those who did not return a postcard were sent a second survey four

weeks after the initial mailing. Reminder notes were sent within a week after each of the two survey mailings.

How: Independent group handled sampling and administration

The Center for Survey Research at the university managed all sampling, survey distribution and data entry functions. The information was gathered and recorded in a way that provided complete anonymity for respondents.

RESULTS – LIMITATIONS

- ➔ The response rate, while similar to other substance use surveys, was low enough to warrant worries of bias.
- ➔ Although the survey was administered and recorded in a way that provided complete anonymity for respondents, it is possible that no amount of anonymity would overcome the fear of putting their employment in jeopardy for some substance abusers.
- ➔ The proportion of substance abusers in this sample was low and may, therefore, under-represent the true proportion in the population.
- ➔ The sample demographics matched the population demographics, supporting the validity of extrapolation from this sample to the university employee population.
- ➔ A small but substantial percentage (>15%) of employees engage in binge drinking.

- ➔ Over 50% of users of illegal drugs have used within the past month.

CONCLUSIONS

- ➔ These findings suggest that problematic substance use is a significant problem for about 20% of employees.
- ➔ 15% of employees have used the Faculty/Employee Assistance Program (FEAP). This is significant as the mandate of the FEAP is prevention, early intervention and case management for substance abuse and mental health problems.
- ➔ Only 36% of employees know of IQ Health Virginia.
- ➔ These survey results suggest a need for better marketing of IQ Health Virginia's preventive health services for university employees.

In response to this need, the CSAP-funded study has:

- ➔ developed a web site for IQ Health Virginia,

- ➔ developed a social marketing campaign,
- ➔ designed informational training for managers and supervisors.